

Barbados, Grenada, Trinidad, Tobago (April-May, 1968)

By C. G. M. de WORMS, M.A., Ph.D., F.L.S., F.R.E.S. -

Any part of the West Indies must of necessity be an attraction to anyone interested in the Lepidoptera of that very delectable part of the world which harbours some of the world's choicest species and especially the island of Trinidad which can boast of no less than just over 600 kinds of butterflies. My enthusiasm to visit this region was fired by a most illuminating and entertaining article by Mr. T. H. Homer (*Ent. Record*, 1967: 79, 163) in which he describes in detail his experiences during a stay of some two months on Trinidad in the autumn of 1966 and from which he returned with a rich harvest of captures. Though this fine and large island was the main objective of my journey, I thought it worth while to visit another one in the main chain of the Caribbean group so as to sample its lepidopterous fauna as well. The one that seemed the most attractive and congenial was Grenada which I was told was the least unspoilt. Very successful and rewarding my choice proved to be. Not long before setting out I had happened to meet Dr Norman Hickin who had just visited this area. He at once said he would contact the various representatives of his firm, Rentokil, on the respective islands. The kindness of these people helped to make my time among the most enjoyable periods I have ever spent, and I would like to express at this stage my extreme indebtedness to them.

Accordingly I set out from London Airport, at mid-day on 19th April, in a VC10. After an eight-hour flight we had a brief halt at Bermuda and then a further three-hour leg to Barbados where I was met by Mr Brian Parsons of Rentokil who conducted me to very sumptuous quarters in the Paradise Beach Club by the shore near Bridgetown. That evening I was able to sample the real tropical atmosphere and temperature of the New World. The following morning Mr Parsons and his wife picked me up and kindly took me for a tour of this most delightful island with its quiet Caribbean shore to the west and its wild Atlantic coast to the east side, but most of its landscape is made up of vast sugar plantations with hardly any of the original vegetation still extant except for a small area of forest in the north which we visited. Only a sprinkling of yellow Pierid butterflies were on the wing in the heat of the day which we spent at Mr Parson's very beautiful residence on the outskirts of Bridgetown. In the afternoon we motored to the airport where I embarked for Grenada which was reached in under an hour. We landed at the airstrip on the east of the island and I had a delightful drive in heavy rain over the mountainous centre for fifteen miles to the capital at St George's. The winding road through the forest and plantations of cocoa and nutmeg bordering the roads ascended to nearly 2000 ft. at the summit near the Grand Etang which is an old crater. We were able to see still the ravages of the great hurricane of 1955. I went on three miles south of St George's to what was to be my headquarters for the next ten days, the very comfortable Silver Sands Hotel on the lovely Grand Anse Beach. The main holiday season was over with few visitors. On an open landing leading to my room I was greeted by quite an assortment of moths of all descriptions at rest below a light which was kept on all night. Of these there was the spectacular

Agrius cingulata, a Sphingid looking very similar to our *Convolvulus* Hawk. The walls were plastered with the geometer *Semaepus caecaria*, very like *Cosymbia puppillaria*. Another very attractive little moth was the local *Racheospila isolata*, a tiny Emerald.

The following day, 21st April, I had my first sample of the island's butterflies which were disporting themselves in fair quantity on a rough patch of ground adjoining the hotel and bordering the beach. The thermometer was standing at nearly 90°F. and after about 1½ hours in this very delectable site I adjourned to the refreshing waters of the Caribbean, but not before I had been able to see and take several interesting species. The large yellow Pierid with a cream female, *Phoebus eubule*, was flying everywhere, while the large common White, *Ascia monuste* was much in evidence with the little fluttering yellow *Eurema venusta* and the diminutive Blue, *Hemiargus hanno*, flitting about among the low herbage. The large speckled Nymphaline, *Anartia jatrophae*, sailed fast round the flowering bushes in the garden with the silver Skipper, *Hesperia syrictus*, in plenty in the grassy patches where it was advisable to watch your step, as the ground was pitted with the large holes of the land crabs. That afternoon I took a walk southwards along the road bordering the Grand Anse Bay. Here I saw *Danaus plexippus* settling on flowering bushes. The next day, the 22nd, after a morning visit to the very picturesque town of St Georges with its hilly and narrow streets, I made a further survey of the derelict patch near the hotel. A host of *Utetheisa bella*, the counterpart to our *U. pulchella*, were often getting up at every footstep and settling on the low herbage. Two other species of Skippers appeared the orange *Polites vibex* and the deep brown *Lerodes euphala*, about the size of our larger Hesperids. Later that day I visited Dr and Mrs Groome at their very delightful large residence near Pointe Saline on the coast to the south of the island. Before I set out from England I had been asked to find out what I could about the status of Well's Ground Dove (*Leptotila wellsi*), a bird peculiar to Grenada, which was thought to have been almost exterminated by the 1955 hurricane. Dr Groome was able to assure that he had heard the bird calling and was fairly sure it was nesting in that vicinity. I did not see for certain this rare species, though several other kinds of Ground Doves were about everywhere in the scrub bush.

The only new butterflies observed and caught on the 23rd were the Fritillary-like *Agriades vanillae* and the local Peacock *Junonia lavinia*, but at rest the following morning outside my room was the grand Hawk-moth, *Pholus vitis fuscatus* together with quite a spate of the fine noctuid *Gerespa famelica*, looking rather like the Alchemyst. Also among this assemblage were a big yellow Thorn-like geometer *Nepheloleuca polita* and a browner insect of the same group *Pero curvistrigaria*. *S. caecaria* was again in plenty and there was one Cossid, *Xyleutes punctifer*.

On 24th April in glorious weather I set out in a taxi driven by a former native policeman for a tour of the whole island which is about the size of the Isle of Wight. We proceeded along the west coast northward and I stopped to collect en route. *A. vanillae* was flitting among the bushes and I was pleased to get a Hairstreak which turned out to be *Thecla angerona*. We continued towards the north visiting a nutmeg centre en route and saw the preparation of this spice. After a picnic lunch on the most northerly point looking out on the chain of Grenadines which separate Grenada from St Vincent, we returned down the Atlantic

coast to the very attractive Westin hall Estate set on the edge of a sort of sea loch and finally through the sugar fields in the south of the island covering about 60 miles in all. The afternoon of the 25th I explored the high ground by the golf course, seeing several *D. plexippus* and the large tailed Skipper, *Eudamus dorantes*. On the 26th Mr Winsborrow drove me over the summit of the island to Grenville. On the way we stopped to see the Grand Etang at close quarters. This small crater lake supplies the whole island with its water. During the last two days of my stay in Grenada I concentrated on the ground in the immediate vicinity of the Silver Sands Hotel, but I did not add any further species of butterflies and the final nights also yielded very few more moths. One of the delights of my time on this lovely island was watching the many Humming birds hovering over every sort of fairly high-flowering plant and bush.

Early on the morning of 29th April I set out once more by car over the mountain pass to the airstrip near Grenville whence I flew the 100 miles to Trinidad where I was met at the airport by Mr Malcolm Barcant whose knowledge of the local butterflies is unsurpassed. He drove me into the capital, Port of Spain, by way of the mountain drive where it is possible to get a fine panorama of the big city of over 100,000 inhabitants. I put up at the extremely comfortable and well-appointed Queen's Park Hotel, where I remained for the whole of my stay on this grand island. That evening I had the opportunity of seeing Mr Barcant's wonderful collection comprising most of the 615 species of butterflies so far known on Trinidad. The next morning he called for me early and kindly motored me some 70 miles southwards down the west coast via San Fernando to the Forest Reserve not far from the famous Pitch Lake. Here we visited Mr. Henry Covia who was employed by the Oil Company. Their rigs are dotted about among the virgin forest with pipe lines along the rough roads and rides traversing this most enchanting region. We drove on into one of the best and thickest parts of the forest soon after 10 a.m. to a spot where Mr. Covia had plastered some trunks in a secluded path with a special concoction made from guavas growing in his garden. No sooner had we got there than I heard our host shout "Here comes a Zebra, there goes a Postman", a species of *Heliconia*. In fact the area seemed alive with lepidopterous life in the great morning heat. One of the earliest arrivals on the bait was a huge *Caligo* (Owl butterfly) and shortly afterwards with a deft stroke of his long-handled net Mr Barcant swept off a grand *Prepona meander*, looking rather like an outsize Purple Emperor. In a small glade we saw several more Zebras, a nymphaline *Gynesia dirce* which takes its name from its very striped underside and also another very striking member of this Family, *Chlosyne saundersii*. Another capture in this spot was one of the Click Butterflies, *Ageronia amphinome* which makes a crack as it flies. We drove on to a part of the forest devoid of oil rigs where we collected along a wide ride bordered with thick undergrowth. It was here that I caught sight of my first *Morpho peleides* as it swept across, though I had already seen several emerging in Mr. Barcant's large conservatory. It was an unforgettable sight. Further along in the thicker forest I took a huge female *Papilio thoas*. It was especially interesting to note how many of the Lycaenids settled on leaves in the shafts of sunlight that penetrated the thick forest. One of these that found its way into our net was the beautiful tailed Blue, *Thecla hemon* with a superb metallic purple upperside, also another paler tailed species *Thecla*

meton. There seemed to be innumerable Skippers and good many Heliconias, to keep us busy, but Mr Barcant assured me it was rather the off season for most of the butterflies. We made our way back to Mr Covia's home for welcome refreshment and got back in the evening to Port of Spain much pleased with our day's trip and harvest.

The next morning, 1st May, Malcolm Barcant again called for me, this time accompanied by Geoffrey Chandler. They took me to a small forest area near the airfield at Las Lomas which was alive with butterflies, in particular the Riodinids which are so numerous in the American tropics. We saw several *Preponas* flying high and *Adelphas* skimming about like White Admirals, of which at least ten species are known in Trinidad. I took up a position just inside the forest where several *Morphos* sailed past me just out of reach and it was amazing to see how they wove their way through the closely-growing trees. About mid-day we went on to another forest area where my host advised me not to penetrate too far into it, as I might meet a bushmaster, one of the most dangerous snakes. We finished up along a most picturesque winding road leading into the mountain chain that crosses the northern area of the island and is for the most part still thickly afforested. In both of these latter localities we saw and took a good many further *Lycaenids* and black and white *Riodinids*.

The morning of the 2nd I took a taxi up to the top of Lady Chancellor Road where there is a wonderful view of the city. Along a wide path leading to the hills there was a large number of species on the wing, including besides *Morphos*, several kinds of *Riodinids* and *Adelphas* together with the ubiquitous *Heliconias* and *Ithomiines* which the former mimic. It was remarkable to observe how similar each of these types of butterflies appeared when flying together. The *Hesperids* were again much in evidence. The following day was indeed a red-letter one for me, but in the sphere of bird-life. Mr. J. N. MacGregor of Rentokil, to whom I was very indebted for much kindness and hospitality, arranged for me to visit the famous Caroni swamp, just south of the city, the home of the superb Scarlet Ibis. I embarked on a flat-bottomed boat and was paddled through the huge mangrove forest till we eventually came out of the waterways into an open sheet of water where I got my first view of these ibises sitting in trees from which a large flock rose looking like a red cloud. In another lagoon we saw numbers of various kinds of egrets and herons nesting with ospreys sailing overhead. It was indeed a most wonderful sight and experience.

I had always heard that the island of Tobago, the proverbial home of Robinson Crusoe, was a small paradise. On the afternoon of 4th May I flew the short distance to the north-east of Trinidad, landing at the western tip of Tobago and thence by car to the very pleasant Bacolet Inn just outside the chief town of Scarborough. Here I spent a most delightful week-end. Several Swallow-tails were flying round the garden of the hotel as well as the usual number of *Riodinids*. On the 5th I got a view of the centre of the island when I visited friends on the north side. But it was on the following morning that I hired a taxi to take me to the eastern end along a winding coastal road that went through Speyside to an eminence where there was a grand view of the little township of Charlotteville. It was opposite the former small town that I got a glimpse of Little Tobago, the island which is colonised by Birds of Paradise imported

at the beginning of the century. That afternoon I flew back to Trinidad.

Malcolm Barcant once more kindly called for me at my hotel on the morning of 7th May and drove me into the northern mountains to a most enchanting locality, near Lalaha, where there was a fine assortment on the wing. With his high net he swept off three males of the superb Nymphaline, *Catanephele numilia*, known as the King Shoemaker, with its huge orange patches on a background of purple, while the female is a more sober blue-grey and white. Many Adelphas were sailing around with an occasional Prepona. There were many kinds of Heliconias and Ithomiines including some of the transparent species. Suddenly I was aware of a big butterfly near me and with a sweep of the net I found I had a fine Morpho, which are apparently quite a feat to take in full flight. This was the climax of a glorious day. Just after this spectacular capture my companion made an even more remarkable one. Wielding his long net high up, he found he had in it a transparent Ithomiine which he did not recognise. This eventually turned out to be *Pteronymia artena*, a species new to the Trinidad list and the thirteenth addition he had made to the butterflies of the Island.

The following morning, again at an early hour, we set out again for a valley running up into the mountains just at the back of the City. This very attractive area was bordered on one side by a deep-set stream and we wended our way up a winding path. Adelphas were once more to the fore and I netted one of the rarer species, *A. naxia*. We also took two small black tailless *Papilios* feeding on a flowering bush, *Parides cymochles* and *Parides parianus*. With them were also some of the Dynamine, small spotted Nymphalines together with black and whites Riodinids and many kinds of Heliconias as well as some small brown Satyrids. In the afternoon we motored some 15 miles eastwards to another locality bordering the mountains, but we were much dismayed to find that the forest area had been largely cut down and was now very devoid of butterflies. So we returned to the vicinity of the Capital where in a small shaded bed of a stream right in the suburban area at the foot of Lady Chancellor Road we found a wealth of insects fluttering under the trees. These were mainly Heliconias and Ithomiines, but my final catch was the black and white *Phyciodes leucodesma*, a small Nymphaline looking very like a Riodinid. This was my last sample of collecting on Trinidad.

The next morning, 9th May, I took a taxi early and went for a most enchanting drive over a high mountain pass to the beautiful Maracas Bay on the north coast which harbours a grand bathing beach. In the afternoon, with a heavy heart, I took the plane for Barbados and, after a brief halt there and on Antigua and Bermuda, I reached London at dawn on the 10th and was breakfasting in my own home at Woking. So ended what had been a most enjoyable and successful tour which gave me my first taste of the American Tropics. I cannot emphasise too much how deeply grateful I was to the many people who so kindly entertained me and made this trip one that will remain among the best I have ever undertaken.

I have thought it of interest to enumerate the Lepidoptera observed on this tour. The following species were noted on Grenada between 20th and 29th April.

Butterflies:—

PIERIDS

- Phoebus eubule* L.
Ascia monuste L.
Eurema venusta L.

DANAIDS

- Danaus plexippus* L.

NYMPHALINES

- Agriades vanillae* L.
Junonia lavinia L.
Anartia jatrophae L.
Cystaneura cana Erichs.

Moths taken on Grenada:—

SPHINGIDAE

- Agrius cingulata* F.
Pholus vitis fuscatus L.

ARCTIIDAE

- Utetheisa bella* L.

NOCTUIDAE

- Leucania solita* Willgrn.
Concana mundissima Wkr.
Bleptina caradrinalis Guen.
Zale lunata Drury
Gerespa famelica Guen.
Eutelia ablatrix Guen.
Oblima spec. near *pyraloides*
 Wkr.

LYCAENIDS

- Thecla angerona* Gdmn. & Slvn.
Hemiargus hanno Stoll.

HESPERIDS

- Hesperia syrichtus* F.
Polites vibex Geyer
Lerodes euphala Edw.
Eudamus dorantes Stoll.
Polygonus catillus Cr.

GEOMETRIDAE

- Racheospila isolata* Warren
Semiothisa everiata Guen.
Semaepus caecaria Hübn.
Disclisioprocta stellata Guen.
Nepheloleuca polita Cr.
Pero curvistrigaria H.-S.

COSSIDAE

- Xyleutes punctifer* Gdrt.

PYRALIDAE

- Mesocondyla gastralis* Guen.
Agathodes designalis Guen.

Butterflies seen and caught on Trinidad between 30th April and 9th May:—

PIERIDS

- Eurema albula* Cr.

MORPHOS

- Morpho peleides* L.

PAPILIOS

- Papilio thoas* L.
Parides cymochles Dbl.
Parides parianus R. & J.

HELICONIAS

- Heliconius erato* L.
Heliconius hydara Hew.
Heliconius ricini L.
Heliconius melpomene L.
Heliconius wallacei Reak.
Heliconius ethilla Btlr.
Eueides aliphera Gdrt.

ITHOMIINES

- Tithorea megara* Gdrt.
Ithomia pellucida Weym.
Hymenitis andromica Hew.
Pteronymia artena Hew.

- Hypoleria ocalea* Hew.
Melinaea lilis sola Kaye
Hypothyris euclea Gdrt.
Mechanitis isthmia kayei Btlr.
Lycorea cleobaea ceres Gdrt.
Aeria agna Gdmn. & Slvn.

NYMPHALINES

- Gynesia dirce* L.
Didonis biblis L.
Ageronia amphinome L.
Catanephele numilia Cr.
Chlosyne saundersii Dbl. &
 Hew.
Prepona meander Cr.
Adelpha iphicla L.
Adelpha naxia Fdr.
Cystaneura cana Erichs.
Dynamine theseus Fdr.
Dynamine mylitta F.
Dynamine artemisia F.
Phyciodes leucodesma F.

SATYRIDS

Euptychia hesione Sulz.*Euptychia hermes* F.

LYCAENIDS

Thecla hemon Cr.*Thecla meton* Cr.*Thecla linus* F.*Thecla basilides* Geyer*Thecla orchidia* Hew.*Thecla philinna* Hew.*Thecla nubes* Druce*Leptotes cassius* Cr.

RIODINIDS

Calephelis nilus laverna Gdmn.
& Salvén.*Nymphidium onaeum* Hew.*Nymphidium calyce* F.

HESPERIDS

Staphylus vulgata Kaye*Hesperia syrichtus* F.*Eudamus proteus* L.*Polites otho* Smith*Arotis sirene* Mab.*Milanion hermes* Cr.

I would like to express how indebted I am to Mr. Barcant and also to Mr. G. Tite, of Tring Museum, for naming the majority of the butterflies I took on Trinidad, as well as to Mr. D. S. Fletcher, Mr. A. Hayes and Mr. T. G. Howarth of the Entomological Department of the British Museum (Natural History), for their help in the identification of a number of species enumerated above.

Breconshire and Monmouthshire Entomology

By J. M. CHALMERS-HUNT

INTRODUCTION

As much of Breconshire is *terra incognita* to the Lepidopterist, I decided to investigate this year a few of its unexplored areas, and on May 25 arrived by car at Crickhowell, prepared for a fortnight's entomologising. The weather was particularly favourable during my stay, and daytime excursions into remote parts of this picturesque corner of the Principality afforded me much interest and enjoyment, as did a number of visits to localities in the ancient forest terrain of east Monmouthshire, so renowned for its entomological richness.

I undertook no night expeditions, but my friend Mr. J. P. Sankey-Barker of Llangattock, most kindly invited me to run an m.v. trap on the lawn of his beautiful garden. The nights were propitious, and among the more notable species to occur in the trap were *Harpyia bicuspis* (Borkh.), *Acronycta alni* (L.) (a melanic form), *A. menyanthidis* (Esp.), and *Laconobia biren* (Goeze)=*glauca* (Hübner)—the last two occurring here apparently at about the most southerly edge of their range.

There is no published account of the butterflies and moths of Breconshire, but I have a MS. list of its Lepidoptera containing so far as I am aware every known record. I have therefore indicated with an asterisk as probably new to the county, any species noted by me during my travels which was not included in that list. I should add that besides Lepidoptera, it is my custom when working relatively neglected areas to take *en passant* representatives of other insect orders, and a list of some of these is appended.

The following is a note of the localities visited from which insects were recorded. *Breconshire*: Beulah, boggy marshland, 1.6; Brecon, flowery waysides, 27.5; Builth Wells, wood, 6.6; Craig-y-Cilau Nature